THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRIMANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) The in-place hydrocarbon reserves are 5576.6 Million Metric Tonnes (MMT) of oil and 2328.51 Billion Cubic Metres (BCM) of gas as on 1.4.2004. The reserve estimation for 2004-05 is under finalisation.

(b)For exploration of hydrocarbons, Government have taken the following steps:—

(i) New areas for further exploration have been opened up under the New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP). Under NELP, 90 exploration blocks have been awarded to various companies in four rounds of exploratory bidding held till now. The exploration work in NELP blocks has led to 13 oil/gas discoveries so far. 20 more exploration blocks have been offered for international competitive bidding under the fifth round of NELP.

(ii) Acceleration exploration programme by National Oil Companies (NOCs) in areas awarded to them on a nomination basis.

(c)and (d) On 4 January, 2005, the Government of India announced the fifth round of the New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP), under which 20 exploration blocks have been offered. The bid closing date for these blocks is 31 May, 2005. The details of the blocks on offer is annexed as Statement [Refer to the Statement appended to the Answer to Unstarred Question 4277 part (a)]. Oil and gas production from these blocks would depend upon the result of exploration carried out by the companies after the award of the blocks.

Petroleum and gas reserves

4284. SHRI SHAHID SIDDIQUI: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the names of States where petroleum and natural gas were found in last three years;

(b) what is the estimated quantity of crude petroleum in the country; and

(c) whether there is a possibility of petroleum and gas reserves in the Himalayan range?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) During the last three years (2002-03 to 2004-05),

new hydrocarbon finds were made by Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Ltd.(ONGC), Oil India Ltd. (OIL) and private/joint venture companies in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Tripura.

(b) The estimated balance recoverable oil and gas reserves in the country as on 1.4.2004 are 1658.33 Million Metric Tonnes(MMT). Reserve estimation for 2004-05 is under finalisation.

(c) Based on present day geological knowledge and assessment of prospectivity, the Himalayan foot-hills do have the possibility of finding hydrocarbons, however, no commercial strike has so far been made in this region.

Strike by petroleum dealers

4285. SHRI DATTA MEGHE: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Federation of All India Petroleum Dealers called for closure of all petrol pumps in the country from midnight of April 17 to MidnightofApril 18,2005;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the major demands of the petroleum dealers; and

(d) the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. The Federation of All India Petroleum Traders (FAIPT) called for a closure of all petrol pumps in the country from midnight of 17 April, 2005 to midnight of 18 April, 2005. However, during this period all company owned company operated (COCOs) and Jubilee retail outlets were in operation to meet customer demand.

The major demands raised by FAIPT include increases in dealer commissions and allowances, uniform tax rates on petrol and diesel throughout the country and linking of commissions to the retail prices of the products.

(d) The issues raised by FAIPT are under consideration of the Government.

Import of crude from Saudi Arabia

4286. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state: